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Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1770 (2007)

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 6 of its resolution 1770 (2007), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council on a quarterly basis on the fulfilment of the responsibilities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The present report is the third submitted pursuant to that resolution.

2. The report provides an update on United Nations activities in Iraq since the last report (S/2008/19), dated 14 January 2008, with a continued focus on steps taken to implement resolution 1770 (2007). It presents a summary of key political developments during the period under review, including activities pertaining to resolution of disputed internal boundaries, as well as regional and international events concerning Iraq.

II. Summary of key political and security developments in Iraq

3. Despite some improvements in the security situation, the Government of Iraq continues to face formidable challenges to reaching a national consensus on how to share power and resources; however, efforts were made at reconciliation through legislation. On 12 January 2008 the Justice and Accountability Law was adopted by the Council of Representatives, replacing earlier debaathification policies. On 13 February the Council of Representatives passed a package of laws: the Law on Governorates not Organized into a Region, the General Amnesty Law and the 2008 Budget. This package represented a compromise between the interests of three parliamentary blocks: the Kurdistan Alliance, the United Iraqi Alliance, and Tawafuq. Efforts to persuade Tawafuq to rejoin the Cabinet are continuing as part of a wider attempt to restructure the Government.

4. The growing Sahwa movement, composed of local alliances of tribal sheikhs that have been instrumental in providing neighbourhood-level security in Anbar province and other formerly restive areas, established the "Awakening Conference" at a meeting in Ramadi on 13 February, publicly announcing its transformation from a tribal grouping to a political bloc with aspirations for participating in Governorate Councils and the next general legislative elections. Despite their relative success and growing numbers, Sahwa Council forces, which currently number over 90,000 nationwide, temporarily withdrew their support of the multinational force in

Iraq and the Iraqi Security Forces in Diyala and Babil. Fraying relations between the Government of Iraq and tribal elements in Anbar province caused a spike in violence in this area. Tensions were also reported between the Sahwas and the Iraqi Islamic Party. Slightly more than 10,000 Sahwas have now been transferred into the regular security forces.

5. On 17 February the five-month-old stabilization pact between the Sadrist Movement and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq expired, and on 22 February, Moqtada al-Sadr extended the freeze on military activities by the Mahdi Army. The Prime Minister's Office, the multinational force in Iraq and UNAMI publicly welcomed the announcement as a boost to security and national unity in Iraq. However, on 24 March the Government announced an operation to pursue criminal elements in Basra. This led to six days of intense fighting between the Government and armed groups, including the elements of the Mahdi Army, in many parts of the country until agreement was reached to stop the violence, by which time, according to several sources, over 700 people had been killed. The security situation in Basra and Baghdad had eased since this agreement. Military and police are continuing operations to seize militia assets in both cities and the resistance from militias has been minimal and short-lived. On 5 April, the Iraqi President, Prime Minister and the heads of political blocs in Parliament issued a 15-point statement calling on all parties and political blocs to dissolve their militias immediately and hand in their weapons. The statement did not mention any militias by name.

6. Security arrangements by the Government of Iraq supported by the multinational force are believed to have prevented mass casualty attacks during Ashura and Arba'in festivities in Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf. There was a decrease in violent incidents compared to previous years and an apparent increase in the public turnout. According to the provincial governor, 2 million visitors gathered in Karbala alone.

Regional developments pertaining to Iraq

7. The Government of Iraq continued to strengthen ties with neighbouring countries. For the first time in the modern political history of Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, visited Baghdad on 2 and 3 March 2008. He met with the President, Jalal Talabani, the Prime Minister, Nuri Kamel al-Maliki, and others, primarily to discuss economic and development cooperation.

8. On 7 March, President Talabani was the first democratically elected Iraqi Head of State to visit Turkey. The two-day visit focused on closer economic cooperation and efforts to confront Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) elements. Days earlier, Turkish armed forces had withdrawn from northern Iraqi territory after a week-long cross-border ground operation against PKK armed elements based inside Iraqi territory.

9. On 28 February, a delegation from the League of Arab States concluded a three-day visit to Baghdad to discuss national reconciliation with Iraqi officials as well as political and tribal leaders. Efforts to encourage the Governments of Arab States to open embassies in Iraq continued, and on 11 and 12 March, Iraq hosted the 13th Meeting of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference in Arbil. On 24 March, Bahrain announced its decision to reopen its embassy in Iraq and appoint an ambassador. Preliminary assessments between the Government of Iraq and other

Arab States on their representation in Baghdad are reportedly under way. On 30 March, Iraq participated in the Arab League Summit in Damascus. The Government of Iraq reportedly expressed its reservations with certain sections of the final communiqué related to Iraq.

10. On 20 January 2008, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Hoshyar Zebari, publicly emphasized the importance of holding expanded meetings with neighbouring countries at the ministerial level and the affiliated working groups. In his view, the regional mechanism has proved to be effective for the situation in Iraq. On 2 and 3 March, a second round of meetings on regional dialogue between Iraq and its neighbours got under way with a meeting of the Working Group on Energy in Istanbul. On 18 March the Working Group on Refugees met in Amman, co-chaired by Jordan and Iraq. The Syrian Arab Republic hosted a meeting of the Working Group on Security and Border Control on 13 April in Damascus. Participation in the meetings was more inclusive in terms of regional representation than in previous ones.

11. Efforts to organize a fourth round of direct talks on Iraqi security issues between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran at the technical level remained unfulfilled. The Iraqi Government announced in March that in the future it would take responsibility for setting the dates for such meetings to avoid delays.

III. Activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq

Political activities

12. My Special Representative and other senior UNAMI officials have continued to engage with a wide range of Iraqi political figures, both in Government and in Parliament, as well as diplomatic and military officials based in Baghdad, on various aspects of the UNAMI expanded mandate. He also explored ways to further the prospects for national reconciliation and political dialogue.

13. On 5 March 2008, my Special Representative travelled to Turkey for discussions with senior officials at the Foreign Ministry. Their talks covered the role of the United Nations in facilitating national reconciliation and regional dialogue, including in the context of northern Iraq.

14. On 11 March my Special Representative visited Najaf and held extensive meetings with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Grand Ayatollah al-Hakim, Ayatollah Muhammad al-Yacoubi, the Governor of Najaf and other religious leaders and political figures, including representatives of the Sadrist Trend. The meetings focused on provincial elections, national reconciliation, government performance and the need to provide assistance to Iraq's vulnerable communities, especially internally displaced persons. UNAMI intends to carry out more frequent visits to Najaf to maintain close contacts with key interlocutors.

15. My Special Representative chaired the first comprehensive anti-corruption conference for Iraq on 17 and 18 March 2008. He also attended a Government of Iraq national political reconciliation conference in Baghdad on 18 March 2008. Despite an initial desire to participate, the Sadrist Trend and Tawafuq decided to boycott the conference to signal their dissatisfaction with how negotiations for their return to the Iraqi cabinet were proceeding.

16. As part of its programme to expand United Nations outreach throughout the country, UNAMI has started deploying national Governorate Liaison Officers to each governorate of Iraq to help the Mission better understand the political, economic, social and security conditions in all areas of Iraq by liaising with local authorities and political parties and providing feedback to UNAMI. Moreover, this process would assist in designing programmatic responses that are most suited to particular Iraqi governorates. In March, UNAMI deployed its first nine Governorate Liaison Officers in Muthanna, Baghdad, Karbala, Najaf, Qadisiyah, Hilla, Nasariyah, Salahaddin and Wassit governorates. It is currently in the process of selecting candidates from the remaining governorates.

17. During the reporting period, UNAMI hosted several high-level visitors: David Veness, Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security; António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Antonio Maria Costa, Director-General of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; and Jan Mattson, Executive Director of UNOPS. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, visited the UNAMI office in Amman. Mr. Veness' visit was aimed at reviewing operating assumptions and updating security arrangements to enable the Mission to operate more effectively in the light of its expanded mandate. During Mr. Guterres' visit, he highlighted the need for implementing a joint assessment of the conditions for the return of internally displaced persons and decided to transfer the UNHCR Country Representative from Amman to Baghdad, along with key functions and other officials. Mr. Costa also committed to a presence of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Baghdad in the context of the United Nations system support to strengthen those Iraqi institutions which play a critical role in securing transparency and efficiency in implementing the Compact. The visit of Mr. Holmes to Amman was aimed at raising awareness of the gravity of the humanitarian situation in Iraq and the need for additional assistance for Iraqi refugees and the increasing number of internally displaced persons.

Disputed internal boundaries

18. Pursuant to its mandate under paragraph 2 of resolution 1770 (2007) to help resolve disputed internal boundaries, UNAMI has prioritized activity on this issue, especially in northern Iraq. The Mission has sought to take advantage of the agreed six-month delay in implementing article 140 of the Constitution after its expiry on 31 December 2007 by facilitating dialogue on relatively non-contentious areas to begin with in order to build confidence and momentum among the parties, and to identify principles that could be used as part of a common approach to tackle the more disputed territories, including the city of Kirkuk.

19. In January 2008 UNAMI put together a dedicated team of political, electoral, human rights and constitutional officers to consider the multiple dimensions of this complex and sensitive issue. The team has systematically compiled source material, liaised with the Article 140 Committee and closely analysed its recommendations, and conducted interviews with Iraqi interlocutors across the political and ethnic spectrum. Since January 2008, a series of field visits have been carried out by UNAMI to establish contacts with local stakeholders and gather detailed district-level information in Kirkuk, Mosul, Tikrit and Arbil.

20. Mission efforts have focused on a number of initial areas that may offer the possibility for an early resolution by the Iraqi authorities. In early April my Special

Representative and senior UNAMI officials led teams to these locations in order to hear the views of local leaders on the ground and consult with them on confidence-building measures that could be taken by the respective communities. Based on these visits, UNAMI will provide technical assistance and recommendations to the Iraqi authorities involved in the decision-making process.

Regional dialogue

21. UNAMI participated as an observer in the meetings of the three technical working groups, held in Istanbul, Amman and Damascus, and pertaining to regional dialogue between Iraq and its neighbours in March and April. The Mission also attended several preparatory meetings in Baghdad and Amman with Iraqi diplomatic counterparts and experts.

22. In mid-March UNAMI organized a five-day training session for eight staff working for the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and assigned to a dedicated support unit tasked with assisting the preparation and follow-up of regional meetings at the working and ministerial levels. The first tangible contributions are expected in terms of practical support and the development of an agenda for the next expanded meeting of Iraqi neighbours in Kuwait on 22 April 2008. Through a senior Special Adviser in UNAMI, the Mission is working to enhance the quality of diplomatic liaisons between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and stakeholders, and is helping to develop strategic options for expanding cooperation with Iraq's neighbours. This includes working closely with United Nations Resident Coordinators from several neighbouring States to better coordinate and plan United Nations support to the regional dialogue process.

Electoral activities

23. UNAMI continues to work closely with the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq to ensure that it attains a state of readiness to conduct future election events that are seen as credible and accepted by the Iraqi people. Possible election activities in 2008 could include a nationwide voter registration update exercise, referendum on the formation of regions, a referendum on a new constitution and governorate elections.

24. UNAMI has enhanced its efforts to support the Commission in preparations for a voter registration update exercise scheduled to take place in June. Critical elements in this regard were the development of a comprehensive budget and the finalization of a provisional voter list based on the public distribution system database. UNAMI helped to design a selection process involving 130,000 individual applications for 6,500 voter registration staff, who have yet to be trained and deployed. My Special Representative visited the Commission in late March 2008 to familiarize himself with the selection process of the staff for some 550 voter registration centres located in all Iraq governorates.

25. On 14 February 2008, my Special Representative announced at a press conference with top leaders of the Council of Representatives in Baghdad that UNAMI would assist with a professional and transparent selection process for the directors of eight governorate electoral offices where there had been no consensus among the political parties on possible candidates. An application drive was launched the same day on Iraqi radio and in all leading newspapers. Pre-screened

candidates were submitted by my Special Representative to the Council of Representatives in a subsequent press conference on 2 April.

26. Priority was given to developing vital electoral legislation. UNAMI has provided assistance to both the election commission and the Government of Iraq on developing a new election system to better reflect the wishes of the Iraqi people and better accommodate women, internally displaced persons and minority groups. The Government of Iraq drafting has so far limited internally displaced person voting to places of origin. Discussions and working sessions with all political blocs and special interest groups consumed much of the Mission's activities in March and are planned throughout April, as UNAMI tries to forge political consensus on key elements of a law.

27. Critical political decisions will have to be made if scheduled election activities are to be completed in 2008. The Commission must receive a budget immediately, and a political agreement on the terms of voter eligibility (particularly those relating to internally displaced persons) must be reached in the coming weeks if a 30-day voter registration update exercise is to begin in June. In addition, a governorate election law must be written and adopted by the Council of Representatives in May if Governorate Council elections are to take place in 2008. Given that there is little flexibility in the operational timeline, if these political actions are not taken as scheduled, that may hinder the Commission from conducting governorate elections later this year.

Constitutional support activities

28. The Council of Representatives has extended the mandate of the Constitutional Review Committee until the end of the current legislative term in June 2008. On 5 April, the Political Council for National Security called for expediting the process of constitutional amendments. The Committee has indicated that it plans to refer issues upon which it is unable to reach consensus to the Presidency Council, the Prime Minister and his deputies, and the Speaker of the Council of Representatives and his deputies. The UNAMI Office of Constitutional Support will continue to provide advice and assistance to the Constitutional Review Committee as it seeks to finalize its proposals.

29. During the reporting period, the UNAMI Office of Constitutional Support provided advice and assistance to the Council of Representatives on constitutionally mandated legislation, particularly on the Law on Governorates not Organized into Regions (Provincial Powers Law). This included responding to a request by Deputy Speaker Sheikh Khaled al-Attiya to provide a technical brief on the scope and application of the principle of administrative decentralization as it relates to Iraq's governorates. UNAMI also continued its role as the co-chair of the international legislative round table, an informal mechanism developed jointly by the Office of Constitutional Support, the European Commission, the United Kingdom Embassy and the United States Embassy aimed at coordinating international community efforts to facilitate assistance to the Iraqi Government on Council of Representatives legislation. Round-table discussions during the reported period were held on disputed internal boundaries, the Provincial Powers Law and the legal framework for upcoming provincial elections.

30. On 8 March 2008, UNAMI and the United Nations Office for Project Services completed a one-week study tour to Northern Ireland for members of the

Constitutional Review Committee and other parliamentarians covering the full range of Iraq's political blocs. Funding was provided by the European Union. The study tour gave Iraqi parliamentarians the opportunity to engage in direct dialogue with counterparts who had participated in the Northern Ireland peace process and to explore how power-sharing can be part of an institutional framework to support the political settlement of sectarian conflict. UNAMI plans to provide its good offices to bring this experience to bear in future multi-party dialogues on divisive constitutional issues in Iraq.

Humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development

31. The Iraq 2008 consolidated appeal was launched on 12 February in Baghdad and was also presented to the Kurdistan regional government Council of Ministers in Arbil on 13 February. The consolidated appeal process includes appeals from 14 United Nations agencies and 10 non-governmental organizations for $265 million in support of targeted relief operations to deliver emergency aid in the areas of health and nutrition, education, water and sanitation, housing and shelter, food, and protection. By the end of the first quarter of 2008, $43 million (16 per cent) of the consolidated appeal process has been funded and an additional $62 million has been pledged.

32. The United Nations country team policy group in Baghdad, consisting of senior United Nations staff representing various sectors, has been providing direct technical assistance to the Government and is working to support the development of realistic budgets and the timely disbursement of funds. Advice is also being provided at the request of the Government on the drafting of a more operational National Development Strategy, linked to the national budget, with greater emphasis on decentralization.

33. The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General is reviewing the governance and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the Iraq Trust Fund. In parallel, an in-depth review of projects under implementation has resulted in updated data on the status of the United Nations Development Group activities in Iraq funded by the Iraq Trust Fund. The review process will lead to renewed programming efforts by the United Nations system in support of the International Compact and National Development Strategy of Iraq. I am grateful for the support of many donors for United Nations-organized efforts in Iraq, in particular the European Union and Japan.

34. The spiral of violence in southern Iraqi towns and cities, as well as in areas in Baghdad, dominated by Shia which took place in late March 2008, reportedly led to the death of over 700 people and 1,500 injured, many of them civilians. In response to the outbreak of violence, the UNAMI Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Humanitarian Coordinator visited Basra from 31 March to 3 April together with a government delegation to assess the situation and delivery of humanitarian assistance. They also concluded that although not a humanitarian crisis, the conflict prevented people from accessing water, medical supplies and food.

35. The Humanitarian Coordinator and the government delegation worked on an action and contingency plan to install early warning measures for the future and mitigate deprivation in view of the long-term neglect of the region. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and MercyCorps distributed tankered water in

Basra and Sadr city. UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross delivered surgical and medical supplies in the conflict-affected areas. The International Organization for Migration, UNHCR and MercyCorps delivered food and non-food items in Basra and other locations.

36. UNAMI continued to advocate for and work with the Office of the Prime Minister on the establishment of a permanent unit responsible for supporting the Government in times of humanitarian crisis. The recent humanitarian response to Basra and Baghdad was coordinated by an ad hoc committee on the instruction of the Deputy Prime Minister.

37. UNICEF continued to deliver humanitarian assistance in the wake of attacks in Mosul and Karbala, which have caused numerous casualties dispatching emergency medical supplies for 500 people and supporting school recovery. Humanitarian water-tankering operations continued to reach 125,000 people during the crisis, mostly in Baghdad. UNICEF also distributed 745 emergency Early Childhood Development kits to kindergartens and nurseries in 15 governorates to help young children cope with psychosocial distress. UNICEF continued its advocacy efforts on behalf of detained children at Camp Cropper and other facilities and co-hosted a second high-level consultation on justice for children in the country.

38. An agreement between the Government of Japan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was signed for a $17.6 million project to establish a dedicated maternity and children's hospital in the city of Fallujah in Anbar Governorate. This 24-month project seeks to rehabilitate and convert the present general hospital in Fallujah into a specialized maternity and children's hospital, since the existing general hospital is relocating to new premises.

39. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health in containing a measles outbreak in Anbar. The 10-day immunization drive, executed through house-to-house visits, started on 9 March and reached 198,075 (96 per cent) children from 9 to 59 months of age, of the total target of 206,549. Activities in prevention of Avian Influenza continued nationwide.

40. A joint assessment of the conditions for the return of internally displaced persons to some areas throughout Iraq is being carried out by the Ministry of Displacement and Migration and UNHCR, together with the Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation and the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology and supported by UNAMI, the International Organization for Migration, the International Medical Corps and the United States Agency for International Development/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance/United States. Physical, legal and material safety will be assessed, as well as the socio-economic conditions of internally displaced persons. The assessment is due to start in March and will run through the end of June 2008.

41. On 17 and 18 March in Baghdad, in collaboration with the Iraqi Government and key Iraqi anti-corruption agencies, UNDP with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNAMI organized a high-level conference entitled "International Compact with Iraq: Initiative on Good Governance and Anti-Corruption — Conference on the United Nations Convention against Corruption". The purpose was to identify the challenges facing Iraqi society in advancing public accountability and ethics, to articulate measures in relation to the

United Nations Convention against Corruption and to develop outreach initiatives that can assist in making public institutions more transparent and accountable.

42. The UNAMI/UNOPS non-governmental organization law round table funded by the European Union was held in Arbil on 1 and 2 March. The event was successful, with significant agreement between key Iraqi policymakers and representatives of civil society on the non-governmental organization law. Most non-governmental organization representatives felt their concerns on the independence of their work and activities were contained in the unanimously agreed Declaration of Shared Principles and Recommendations.

43. To commemorate International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action on 4 April, my Special Representative addressed a Government of Iraq event supported by UNDP, at which he stressed the challenges facing Iraq after its signing of the Ottawa Convention in the light of the fact that its territory contains possibly the world's largest number of landmines and unexploded ordnance. UNDP provides technical support to the Ministry of the Environment, which is responsible for mine clearance.

44. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme completed the rehabilitation of two schools in Missan, while work is ongoing in 12 schools in Missan, Samawa, Najaf, Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk. The first phase of a feasibility study on addressing local-level constraints to housing supply in six cities was completed. Arrangements have been finalized to deliver, on a pilot basis, in-country training of contractors and unemployed youth in construction trade practices. A joint programme review with the Government of Iraq and Kurdistan regional government partner ministries was also carried out. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations conducted an assessment of the date and palm sector. The sample data was large, covering 5,000 farms. Rehabilitation of the seed sector was ongoing, with equipment being procured and placed in Iraq. Building plans for fish hatcheries were drawn up.

45. The Government of Iraq has made it known to UNAMI that the conditions for traditional approaches to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are not ripe. However, the Government has requested the United Nations to provide expertise, financial support and advocacy services. In response, UNOPS will field an Advisory Team which will operate within the three pillars (Reintegration, Communications and Coordination) of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration Unit of the Government of Iraq.

46. In February, the Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit was established within the Office of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, bringing together analysts from United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations and linking closely with the information management capacities of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Its overall aim is to examine trends and developments at both the national and local levels that could improve policy, programming, advocacy, and coordination of the international response through the more strategic use of information. The Unit has begun by consolidating existing indicators and information within one repository, which is available on the Unit's website.

47. It has been one year since the launch of the International Compact with Iraq in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on 3 May 2007, as an initiative of the Government of Iraq

to forge a new partnership with the international community. The Government of Iraq and the United Nations, as co-chairs of the Compact, have invited Member States to attend the Iraq Compact Annual Revue Conference, which will take place on 29 May in Stockholm. The Conference will provide an opportunity for the participants to review the progress made in achieving the objectives of the International Compact and to discuss further steps towards fulfilling these goals. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to the Government of Sweden for agreeing to host this important event.

48. As of 31 March 2008, the total contributions to the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund, one of the two funds of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, equalled $1.33 billion. A total of 141 projects and joint programme projects valued at $1.11 billion were approved as of 31 March 2008 for funding under the Trust Fund. Continuing the significant progress in implementation, commitments worth cumulatively $840 million (76 per cent of approved funding) have been entered into and $727 million (65 per cent of approved funding) have been disbursed as of the end of February. Monthly financial updates are made available on the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq website (www.irffi.org). Contributions in the first quarter to the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund included: $27,795,000 from the European Union, and $1,466,000 from the Government of Finland.

Human rights activities

49. On 15 March 2008 UNAMI launched its twelfth human rights report, covering the period from July to December 2007. The report acknowledges the substantive comments on the draft report received from the Kurdistan regional government authorities and the multinational force in Iraq. The report addressed serious human rights concerns with respect to the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan regional government and the multinational force in Iraq and included recommendations aimed at introducing improvements in the human rights situation. UNAMI also welcomed the decision of the Government of Iraq to ratify the United Nations Convention against Torture, as well as its invitation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to visit Iraq. Preparations by government officials for a visit by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture are also under way. The decision by the Government to allow public reporting on its human rights activities was another positive development.

50. Despite improvements in the general security situation, towards the end of 2007 suicide bombings, car bombs and other attacks continued with devastating consequences for civilians. The reduction in security incidents in Baghdad and other locations was also accompanied by a deterioration of the security situation elsewhere, including Mosul and Diyala. Religious and ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups were victims of violent attacks, as were women in so-called "honour crimes". Armed groups also carried out assassinations of government or state officials, religious figures, professional groups and law enforcement personnel. There were also numerous incidents involving intimidation, abduction, torture and extrajudicial killings.

51. A number of measures have been taken by the executive and judicial authorities to improve the handling of detainees, including efforts to ensure more effective judicial oversight and to alleviate overcrowding. In this context, the

UNAMI Human Rights Office continued to visit detention facilities and prisons at the invitation of the relevant authorities in Baghdad and Arbil. It documented cases involving the denial of due process, including the deprivation of access to defence counsel and prolonged pre-trial detention, as well as instances of the torture and ill-treatment of detainees, including juveniles. UNAMI also maintained its monitoring activities of investigations and trials before the Central Criminal Court of Iraq, and recently introduced similar monitoring of proceedings before the criminal courts in the Kurdistan regional government. In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, incidents involving violence against women remained one of the priority concerns, although the Kurdistan regional government has initiated protection procedures for women and continued to work closely with UNAMI to improve the human rights situation in the region.

52. UNAMI welcomed the introduction of measures by the multinational force designed to improve the handling of detainee cases by expediting reviews and decisions on releases, as well as the launching of a major rehabilitation programme for adult and juvenile detainees. UNAMI remains in discussion with the multinational force on granting access to multinational force detention facilities to independent human rights monitors engaged in public reporting, including UNAMI.

53. UNAMI cooperated with the legislative authorities in both Baghdad and Arbil on several pieces of draft legislation affecting the situation of women, the freedom of expression and the establishment of a national human rights commission. The UNAMI programme of capacity-building and training activities remains active, aimed at assisting the Iraqi authorities in fulfilling their human rights obligations and strengthening civil society organizations engaged in human rights protection. With the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNOPS, UNAMI is hosting a training seminar for Iraqi lawyers working with non-governmental organizations that provide legal aid to detainees across Iraq.

54. In March, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General opened a conference organized by UNAMI in Baghdad on the protection of human rights in the context of counter-terrorism measures, with the participation of the Ministers of Human Rights and Interior. The seminar was attended by some 80 Iraqi officials and others involved in crafting and implementing policies to combat terrorism and in adjudicating terrorism-related cases. Experts from the United Kingdom police and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime led discussions on current counter-terrorism practices and legislation, best practices in combating terrorism while protecting human rights, the ratification by Iraq of relevant international treaties and protocols, amendments to Iraqi anti-terrorism legislation and the provision of support and capacity-building activities by United Nations bodies.

Operational, logistic and security issues

55. Following a period of improvements in security, the first quarter of 2008 witnessed a slow but steady increase in violent incidents from January to March. This was not a result of any one specific event, but rather due to the faltering of some key elements underlying security gains in late 2007 against a background of limited political progress. These trends are not irreversible but it will require significant political effort to press forward, given that military efforts alone have not achieved the desired results.

56. As noted in the last quarterly report in December 2007, tensions in the south have been simmering for many months. The various Shia militia factions routinely launch attacks against each other's interests and periodically engage in open conflict lasting several days, or even weeks, before Iraqi Security Forces and the multinational force in Iraq intervene. In February there were numerous public demonstrations against the political and security leadership in Basra. In late March the Government of Iraq launched a new offensive against criminal and militia elements in Basra, which sparked widespread fighting not only in that city but other southern cities and Baghdad as well. The Iraqi Security Forces have conducted operations targeting Jaysh al-Mahdi in Nassiriyah, al-Amarah, al-Kut and Hillah, thus escalating the level of violence in these cities. Najaf and Karbala also suffered explosive attacks in the last week of March, which is highly unusual for these two cities. The incidence of indirect fire attacks on Basra air station rose steadily throughout the quarter, with 48 attacks from January to March. This upward trend in indirect fire attacks is expected as long as factional fighting in Basra persists.

57. In Baghdad the year began on an optimistic note. Sectarian violence appeared much reduced and the number of high-profile attacks had dwindled to such an extent that weeks would go by without a single vehicle bomb or other form of mass casualty attack. However, incidents of roadside bomb attacks against Iraqi Security Forces and multinational forces in particular grew steadily throughout February. By March, the number of daily attacks involving explosive devices, including grenades, rose to averages of between 30 and 40. The security situation in Baghdad continues to limit the daily activities of UNAMI. The indirect fire attacks aimed at the International Zone throughout the quarter was minimal until the last week of March, when fighting between Iraqi Security Forces and Jaysh al-Mahdi in the south prompted a dramatic increase in indirect fire attacks against the military and government facilities in Baghdad, as well as the International Zone. Between 23 and 31 March, there were 47 separate indirect fire barrages consisting of 149 rounds of 122-mm and 107-mm rockets and at least three devastating 240-mm rockets. These attacks caused four deaths, injured another 15 people and inflicted significant damage to housing and office facilities in the International Zone. Among these casualties, one United Nations contractor was killed and two were injured from the direct impact of a 240-mm rocket at the United Nations accommodation camp later in March. By way of comparison, based on information from multiple sources, there were less than a dozen attacks on the International Zone in the six months prior to 23 March.

58. While the security situation in the Kurdistan region of Iraq has remained consistently stable, military operations in Mosul have forced hostile actors to relocate to the region leading to an unusual level of activity. For example, the Palace Hotel in Sulaymaniyah was attacked by a vehicle bomb on 10 March, the first in the province in over a year. The driver of the vehicle and one hotel security guard were killed; of the 32 injured, most had superficial wounds. The Kurdish security authorities were able to effectively manage the situation. In addition, they also uncovered a further two vehicle bomb devices in the region during the first quarter of this year.

59. Nationally, the average number of recorded incidents of violence has slowly climbed during this reporting period. From highs of over 200 per day last summer, the figure had dropped to averages below 80 during the last quarter of 2007. That figure now averages around 130, without calculating the hundreds of exchanges of

fire that have occurred in the south during the last week of March. More disturbing is the renewed propensity for mass-casualty attacks using suicide vests and vehicle bombs, particularly in Baghdad. This trend is believed to be the result of re-engagement by specialized insurgent groups, such as the Islamic State of Iraq, who claim affiliation with Al-Qaida in Iraq.

60. During the past year, UNAMI has made progress in increasing its self-reliance. However, the Mission still depends on Member States for security, logistical, operational and financial support. I am grateful to those Member States that have provided such support in the past and I hope it will continue. In particular, I would like to urge Member States to consider a request to provide additional military advisers to UNAMI, who are essential for the planned expansion of the UNAMI presence and activities beyond its current locations in Iraq.

61. I would also like to thank Member States that have provided financial support to the "distinct entity" which operates under the command of the multinational force and has a dedicated mission to provide security for UNAMI. Thanks to contributions received in late 2007, there are sufficient funds to cover the distinct entity until August 2008. I appeal to Member States that have either contributed in the past, or have not done so already, to consider making additional contributions in 2008 to ensure that the trust fund for the distinct entity is well resourced for at least the remainder of the year.

62. The enhancement of side protection and the repair of the older overhead protection at the UNAMI interim accommodation facility is 90 per cent completed and the construction of additional office space is ongoing. In Arbil there are ongoing projects for the construction of hard-structure accommodation for international staff accommodation, as well as office and medical buildings. Plans are ongoing for additional staff accommodation in view of an expected increase in staff ceiling later in 2008. While undertaking all available steps to increase self-reliance in Iraq, UNAMI intends to continue employing support services under the Logistics Civilian Augmentation Programme and the related 607 Agreement in cases where there is no equivalent service provider.

63. In January UNAMI identified a future site for the United Nations Integrated Compound as an alternative to a site previously chosen. This will provide major savings for the Organization as well as enhanced security. A detailed draft proposal for the United Nations Integrated Compound in Baghdad has been sent to the Office of the Controller and is to be considered by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in early May.

64. Steps are being taken to obtain a dedicated commercial aircraft for UNAMI. The United Nations Procurement Division has completed a competitive solicitation, which is now making its way through the regular United Nations procurement process. It is hoped that in the coming weeks the United Nations will be able to identify a commercial air carrier able to provide an aircraft fitted with the necessary equipment to operate in Iraq. This will go a long way towards helping the Mission to overcome a long-standing operational obstacle.

IV. Observations

65. While some initial steps towards national reconciliation in Iraq have begun, more needs to be done to help Iraqi communities resolve fundamental issues that divide them. Once again I urge influential figures and political parties to publicly reinforce the need for — and to personally work towards — political dialogue, compromise and recognition that Iraq's future depends on its leaders pursuing the Iraqi national interest, rather than individual, party, ethnic or sectarian interests.

66. It is a matter of deep concern that in a country with such vast potential wealth from natural resources, large sections of the population are living in poverty and insecurity. In this regard, I believe that agreement on a hydrocarbon law which enables the sharing of the country's natural resources in a fair and transparent manner could be enormously beneficial, and I call on Iraq's political leadership and Parliament to work together in the country's interest and pass such a law. However, to maximize the reconciliation potential of this law, it will almost certainly need to be accompanied — or swiftly followed — by a broader national compact on power-sharing in the country. The decision of the Constitutional Review Committee to redouble its efforts offers an important opportunity to resolve long-standing disputes between Iraqi communities.

67. I believe that the holding of credible governorate elections later this year, as mandated by recent legislation, could in the long run serve to underpin the legitimacy of democratic governance. In order to ensure that credible electoral events are held on time in 2008, it is essential that Iraqi leaders meet a number of prerequisites. In this regard, I call on Iraq's Council of Representatives to urgently pass a governorate elections law, and urge the Government of Iraq to provide all material assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission in order to conduct these elections as smoothly, transparently and fairly as possible. I also call upon Iraq's political blocs to respect, and to do their utmost to protect, the independence of Independent High Electoral Commission from political interference so that election results can be credible and broadly accepted.

68. The United Nations welcomed the extension of the freeze on military activities of the Mahdi Army, announced by Moqtada al-Sadr on 22 February 2008, as a positive step. Similarly, the end of the fighting in Basra and other places at the end of March was made possible by compromise and agreement. I urge all concerned to do everything possible to maintain the current decrease in violent conflict and to avoid any provocative acts that could serve to undermine it.

69. The issue of disputed internal boundaries continues to be of high importance, both in terms of conflict prevention in northern Iraq and in the context of wider national reconciliation among the country's communities. UNAMI has prioritized this question during the reporting period and I commend Iraq's political leadership for continuing to pursue a solution to this issue via political means. I urge the concerned Iraqi communities to move rapidly to engage in a process of dialogue and agree on basic principles for resolution on less contentious disputed territories first, and more difficult ones in the coming months. While the onus of resolving disputed territories clearly remains with Iraqi leaders, support from the international community will be vital to encourage Iraqi leaders to make real and mutually acceptable compromises. I call upon key Member States to assist in this effort.

70. I encourage Member States to build on the strong international support shown to the recent consolidated appeal for $265 million in support of targeted relief operations. This appeal includes a $20 million Expanded Humanitarian Response

Fund, which will provide the country team with modest flexible funds to ensure a timely response to humanitarian crises. I also encourage the Government of Iraq to strengthen its response to the needs of the most vulnerable populations both inside and outside Iraq. I am pleased that the Government of Iraq, supported by the United Nations, the United Kingdom Department for International Development and USAID, proved itself capable of assuming its responsibilities in taking the lead and mobilizing resources to support those affected by the recent clashes in Basra and Baghdad. However, the United Nations and Member States should not give up their efforts to bolster the central Government's emergency response capacity with a small, dedicated support office to the Prime Minister's emergency focal point.

71. The regional dialogue process is an essential part of efforts by the international community to restore stability and security in Iraq. I urge Member States to seize the opportunity presented by the third expanded meeting of foreign ministers of neighbouring States of Iraq in Kuwait on 22 April 2008 to lend ready support to the regional dialogue process. It is no less important for Iraq to articulate clearly what direction it would like regional cooperation to take. The Conference could give an important impulse for reinvigorating the regional working group meetings, whose potential for coordinated work in joint technical projects has not been fully utilized. It is important for Iraq and its neighbours to focus their efforts on achieving more tangible outcomes at these meetings and ensure proper follow-up.

72. I welcome the positive step taken by Bahrain to commit to reopening an embassy in Baghdad and I look forward to other Arab States among Iraq's neighbours following suit. In this regard, I would also welcome further steps by the Government of Iraq to encourage this development. I would also urge Iraq's neighbours to do their utmost to strengthen border security by doing more to prevent fighters from crossing into Iraq and closing off the supply of weapons, money and training to armed groups that are destabilizing the country.

73. I was concerned by reports indicating that the parties involved in the recent fighting in Basra and other places had committed human rights abuses. I urge those involved to respect their legal obligations under international humanitarian law, which applies both to States and to non-State actors, to minimize harm to civilians. Every effort should be made to avoid excessive or indiscriminate force. Under no circumstances should civilians be used intentionally as human shields in order to deter attacks from enemy combatants, and all captured combatants should be treated in accordance with the laws of war. All those involved should do their utmost to address the humanitarian consequences of the recent fighting, provide access to humanitarian workers, and facilitate the delivery of crucial supplies of medicines, foodstuffs, drinking water, fuel and other critical items to hospitals and the civilian population.

74. I am pleased to note that UNAMI, with full support from Headquarters, has continued to move forward in expanding its activities in line with its mandate as revised in Security Council resolution 1770 (2007). It has shown creativity and determination in its efforts to find new ways to support the people and Government of Iraq. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Special Representative for Iraq, Staffan de Mistura, for his steadfast leadership and strong commitment in meeting the United Nations mandate in Iraq. I would also like to thank the UNAMI national and international staff, as well as the personnel of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, for their tireless efforts under very challenging conditions.

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Report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 11 of Security Council resolution 1590 (2005), in which the Council requested that it be kept regularly informed of progress in implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in the Sudan. The report provides an assessment of the overall situation in the country since my previous report, dated 31 January 2008 (S/2008/64). Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1784 (2007), the present report also provides an assessment of any changes that may be needed to the current mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) to enhance its ability to assist the parties in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. In addition, the report provides an assessment of progress in the implementation of plans for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and sets out benchmarks for achieving further progress in that area, as requested by the Council in its resolution 1784 (2007).

II. Security situation

2. During the reporting period, the overall security situation in the UNMIS area of responsibility remained relatively calm. The parties continued to observe the ceasefire and to cooperate in the ceasefire joint monitoring mechanisms created under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. At the same time, however, the continued presence of military personnel of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) around the oilfields and other areas along the disputed 1956 borderline remained a source of tension, as each side continued to dispute certain military positions held by the other.

3. Clashes over migration routes and grazing rights in Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Abyei, which were addressed in my last report, continued to be the cause of considerable unrest. A road accident on 7 February in Balom, 28 kilometres north of Abyei, involving an SAF truck and vehicles carrying the Commissioner for Abiemnom and his escort ended in a firefight between SPLA and local Misseriya tribal militia, injuring several people. That and other similar incidents have raised tensions in the Abyei area, in some instances triggered or fuelled by false statements in the local media.

4. It has been difficult for UNMIS to properly monitor the situation or verify reported incidents, since the Mission continued to face serious restrictions on its

movement imposed by both sides in the Abyei region, including denial of security clearances for air patrols. Although both parties agreed to a limited lifting of United Nations movement restrictions from 5 April 2008 for fourteen days, the lifting of restrictions only applied to a limited number of locations and did not allow the United Nations freedom of movement to verify troops in critical areas such as Muglad, Grinti/Meiram and Heglig.

5. The frequency of incursions into Southern Sudan by splinter groups of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) increased during the reporting period. The groups carried out attacks against villages and the local population in Western Equatoria state, raiding cattle and abducting women and children, in some instances resulting in deaths. It appears that the LRA elements involved are commanded by mid-ranking officials and are operating alone. The groups are apparently moving in a westerly and north-westerly direction towards the Central African Republic.

III. Political developments

6. As the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) entered their fourth year as partners in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the relationship between them has demonstrated considerable resilience. Both acknowledge that the continued implementation of the Agreement is fundamental to their interests. At the same time, however, the partnership has not yet generated momentum in all areas of implementation, which overall remains considerably behind schedule.

7. On 14 February, President Omar al-Bashir reshuffled the Cabinet of the Government of National Unity, reallocating the portfolios of several NCP Ministers and Ministers of State. Meanwhile, the President of the Government of Southern Sudan replaced the Governor of Upper Nile state, Dak Duop Bishok, with another NCP candidate, Gatluak Deng Garang, with effect from 18 February. Furthermore, on 7 March, Jemma Kumba was appointed as the new Governor of Western Equatoria state. Ms. Kumba is the first female Governor in Southern Sudan since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. During the reporting period, both parties continued to reach out to opposition parties to discuss national issues and the scope for cooperation in advance of the national elections scheduled for 2009.

8. The third meeting of the Sudan Consortium is expected to take place from 5 to 7 May in Oslo. Preparations have been marked by strong collaboration between the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan delegations. In a positive indication of cooperation between the parties on development matters, a joint Government of National Unity-Government of Southern Sudan programme document is expected to focus on joint support to marginalized communities in the border areas. It is expected that the Consortium will be preceded by a closed-door discussion on Darfur, enabling the focus of the event to remain on Comprehensive Peace Agreement issues.

IV. Implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement

9. A number of important milestones remain to be reached if the parties are to complete the interim period in a timely manner. They include final redeployment; the formation of Joint Integrated Units; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants; border demarcation; the resolution of the Abyei issue; preparations for the census and elections; and wealth-sharing concerns, including division of the oil revenues derived from the disputed area of Abyei. Those issues are interlinked. Progress must be made in parallel; delay or confrontation in one area will affect implementation in the other areas.

10. The Technical Ad Hoc Border Committee continued to meet, but did not present its final report as expected during the first quarter of 2008. The Committee has established new timelines that state that it will start its demarcation work in the western and eastern sectors of the border by the end of June 2008, and that work in the central sector will not start before September 2008. In March, the Committee officially requested assistance from UNMIS to purchase satellite imagery to assist in the demarcation process. The United Nations has agreed to procure it by the end of June to support the Committee in adhering to its new timetable.

11. Meanwhile, differences between the parties with respect to the interpretation of the current North-South borderline caused further delay and confusion in the monitoring and verification of redeployed forces, with disagreement over the status of the Sudanese Armed Forces at Abyei and SPLA forces at Kharasana and the assembly area at White Lake/Jau. Although the formation and training of Joint Integrated Units continued, recurring security incidents highlighted their fragile cohesion. Following clashes in Kapoeta on 11 and 12 March 2008 in Eastern Equatoria state, the SAF element of the local Joint Integrated Unit had to be relocated to Torit. However, in Khorflus in Upper Nile state, on 7 and 8 March 2008, the local Unit successfully stabilized a very tense situation after fighting occurred between SPLA and Southern Sudan Police Service elements.

12. The failure of the Presidency to resolve the Abyei issue, including the appointment of a local administration, continued to mar overall implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Following the incident at Balom, Dinka and Misseriya tribal leadership in the Abyei area held reconciliation talks on 20 and 21 February in which they agreed to restore order in the area and to facilitate nomadic migration, and jointly appealed to the Government of National Unity to appoint an Abyei administrator. The Mission actively supported the meetings and provided assistance to the ongoing investigations into security incidents. In a positive step, Government of Southern Sudan President Salva Kiir instructed all Governors of Southern Sudan states to enable free movement of the Misseriya in and out of the South. While those moves helped calm the situation in the short-term, there remains a pressing need to address the Abyei issue at the national level.

13. The SPLM appointment of Edward Lino as its Chairman in Abyei continued to be controversial. Misseriya tribal leadership remained concerned over the appointment, which the SPLM stated was an internal arrangement, acknowledging that only the Presidency could appoint an administrator for Abyei. Following Lino's arrival in Abyei, an increased military presence by both SPLA and SAF in Abyei town contributed to increased tension. Disappointment over the composition and appointment of Lino's administration has fuelled political discontent, marginalizing

moderate voices from both the Misseriya and the Dinka. Those conditions coincided with some reported shifts in population, with many Misseriya moving north out of Abyei town and Dinka moving south.

14. On 11 February, the Presidency decreed 15 to 30 April 2008 as the dates for the national census. In addition to being an important tool for equitable allocation of development funds and service delivery, the census is an important milestone of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that could potentially affect the proportion of seats allocated to Southern Sudan after the national elections. National campaigns to inform the public about the census commenced in February, although with uneven coverage. In the South, the Government of Southern Sudan and UNMIS provided public service announcements in several languages. However, no funding has been made available to cover specific areas, such as Darfur, where misperceptions over the nature of the census exist. Technical preparations made progress, with UNMIS and United Nations partners providing extensive logistical support throughout Southern Sudan and the three areas. In the Abyei area, mapping remained incomplete, with confusion over the respective roles of the Southern Sudan and Southern Kordofan census authorities. In Darfur, approximately 20 per cent of the administrative areas remained unmapped and seemed unlikely to be enumerated owing to the security situation. Strong opposition to the process by rebel groups and the internally displaced persons community in Darfur persists. The monitoring and observation committee of the Southern Sudan Commission for Census, Statistics and Evaluation began selecting and training census monitors and maintains that all formal monitoring should be conducted under its umbrella.

15. On 13 April, the Government of Southern Sudan announced a delay in the census, citing inadequate refugee return and the exclusion of religion and ethnicity from the questionnaire. Following emergency consultations in the Government of National Unity, the Presidency decided that the census would commence on 22 April, and has instructed all levels of government to support that decision, while also reiterating its commitment to recognizing diversity in Sudan.

16. Progress towards the adoption of the electoral law continued to be slow. Various deadlines set by the National Constitutional Review Commission for the parties to resolve their differences over proportional representation, women's representation and the number of constituencies were not met. The draft law has once again been referred to the Presidency. With the National Assembly reconvening in April, it is hoped that the draft electoral law will be tabled during the new session after review in the Cabinet.

17. Figures released by the Ministry of Finance and National Economy show that the total oil revenue for January 2008 amounted to $582.12 million, comprising $464.7 million from exported oil and $117.53 from domestic sales. Of the total revenue, the share of the Government of Southern Sudan amounted to $231.39 million, while the shares of the oil-producing states were as follows: $3.49 million for Unity state; $4.60 million for Upper Nile state; and $2.79 million for Southern Kordofan state.

18. In a decree issued on 12 February, President al-Bashir appointed Derek Plumbly of the United Kingdom as the new Chairman of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission. Mr. Plumbly chaired his first meeting of the Commission on 4 March 2008. My Special Representative for the Sudan, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, has met with the new Chairman and assured him of the Mission's full support to the

Commission. It is hoped that with renewed commitment from the two parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, a more active Commission would be able to focus on key benchmarks and challenges of the Agreement. The Commission, meanwhile, has started preparing its midterm evaluation report to be presented to the Presidency by 9 July 2008.

V. Implementation of other peace processes in the Sudan

19. A key element of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement was the establishment of the Eastern Sudan reconstruction and development fund, an institution which is to plan and oversee a reconstruction and development programme in the three eastern states. In March, the fund's executive director announced that its budget would be $600 million for five years, of which 275 million Sudanese pounds, equivalent to approximately $134 million United States dollars, would be allocated in 2008. A committee has been established to focus on priority projects, for which implementation will begin in July.

20. In Darfur, my Special Envoy, Jan Eliasson, and the African Union Special Envoy, Salim Ahmed Salim, have continued their efforts to prepare for the start of substantive negotiations between the Government of National Unity and the non-signatory movements. The African Union-United Nations Joint Mediation Support Team continued to consult with the five movement groups. Unification efforts and talks on common positions and negotiation teams were disrupted in February by continued violence and insecurity on the ground. The Special Envoys and the Team have urged the movements to cease all hostilities and begin political dialogue. In the light of the deteriorating security situation in the wider region, the Special Envoys have intensified consultations with regional partners and have urged all to work together towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

21. In Juba, the peace process between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army came to the brink of a final agreement. Six key protocols were signed in February, following talks mediated by the Government of Southern Sudan and facilitated by my Special Envoy for the Lord's Resistance Army-affected areas, the former President of Mozambique, Joaquim Chissano, together with several observers including the African Union guarantors. The Mission provided logistical support. The parties initialled the final peace agreement on 25 March. However, the planned signing of the final peace agreement has yet to take place. The United Nations continues to support the Joint United Nations-African Union Chief Mediator and to work for a successful conclusion to the peace process.

22. While political consultations continued, planning also began for possible support of the United Nations to various aspects of the implementation and monitoring of a final agreement, including the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former LRA combatants. To that end, my Special Envoy for the Lord's Resistance Army-affected areas held consultations with the parties, the Government of Southern Sudan and the Special Representatives to UNMIS and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). I will recommend to the Security Council additional provisions that may be required to enable UNMIS to provide support for implementation. Meanwhile, I urge all parties to address the remaining concerns and enable the conclusion of an

agreement that will provide the basis for a lasting peace with justice and support development in Northern Uganda.

VI. Implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan

23. In its resolution 1784 (2007), the Security Council requested me to provide an assessment of whether any changes to the mandate of UNMIS might be needed to enhance its ability to assist the parties in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. A joint technical assessment mission comprised of representatives from UNMIS, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other relevant departments and agencies, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme, conducted a review of the UNMIS mandate from 10 to 21 February 2008. The findings and recommendations of the technical assessment mission, which are set out below, build upon the comprehensive strategic review process undertaken by UNMIS in 2007. Particular attention was given to the issue of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as requested by the Council in paragraph 16 (a) of resolution 1784 (2007).

24. Overall, the technical assessment mission found that the mandate of UNMIS was sufficiently broad to allow it to support the peace process in a wide range of tasks. However, three years after the Mission's establishment, it is notable that the Mission's impact has been greatest in those areas where both parties had sought United Nations assistance, and more limited in areas where one or both of the parties had reservations about the Mission's role and engagement. While a few minor adjustments to the mandate are recommended in the present report, the major challenges for UNMIS in supporting implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement are not related to limitations in its mandate, but to the need for the parties to demonstrate the political will necessary to move forward in implementing the commitments they made under the Agreement. In that regard, it was found that UNMIS should enhance its efforts to build trust with the parties and broaden consent for the Mission's role. At the same time, however, the United Nations must recognize the primary responsibility of the parties and that success in the implementation of its mandate is, in the final analysis, dependent on their willingness to work with the United Nations towards that end.

25. The aim of the United Nations effort in the Sudan should be to support implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with a view to helping the parties fulfil their commitment to making unity attractive and to creating the conditions required for a peaceful referendum in 2011. Within its broad mandate, UNMIS should scrupulously focus on the milestones required to reach the referendum peacefully and, in that context, the essential foundations for peace beyond 2011, regardless of the outcome of the referendum. Success indicators would include: sustainable security cooperation; agreed borders; free movement of people and goods; agreement on wealth-sharing; guarantees of minority rights; demobilization of ex-combatants and development of civilian policing; and reduced economic inequality. My Special Representative, through his good offices, will continue to encourage the parties to focus on those key issues and see the achievement of a peaceful referendum as a win-win outcome.

Military monitoring and verification

26. The Mission has completed a number of its core tasks related to monitoring and verification. It has successfully supported the development of the ceasefire institutions at the national and area levels, strengthening the parties' capacity to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement security arrangements. Withdrawal of the Sudanese Armed Forces from garrison towns in the South is now largely complete. Sudan People's Liberation Army troops have withdrawn from Eastern Sudan and have begun movement out of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states. UNMIS has also monitored and in some cases assisted the deployment of troops to the Joint Integrated Units, of whom some 85.5 per cent are now in position.

27. However, conditions are not yet in place to begin to reduce the UNMIS military presence. Although the security situation remains calm, it is still volatile, and the need for continued monitoring is considerable. Both parties retain forces in the border area, and monitoring tasks remain vital with regard to Joint Integrated Units. Other armed groups and factions pose localized threats as does the risk of spillover of the Darfur conflict. Moreover, the movement of the Lord's Resistance Army from Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to threaten security in parts of Southern Sudan.

28. Depending upon the decisions of the Security Council regarding the peace process between LRA and the Government of Uganda, UNMIS may be required to support tasks associated with implementation of the Juba agreement, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Pending a decision in that regard, it will be important for UNMIS, within existing capacity, to monitor LRA activity in Southern Sudan that may have implications for the security of UNMIS-mandated activities. Close cooperation between UNMIS and MONUC will continue to be important to ensure effective oversight of cross-border security challenges.

Joint Integrated Units

29. Development of the Joint Integrated Units is a complex political and military challenge. The Units are a critical part of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement security arrangements, required to enable full redeployment and joint oversight of the oilfields. They are an important symbol of cooperation and will form the nucleus of a new national army if the South votes for unity. However, if they are to play an effective role in building peace in the Sudan, the Units require a clear operational function, basic training and equipment and further integration of SAF and SPLA units.

30. As mandated by the Security Council and at the request of the Joint Defence Board, which is the national body responsible for Joint Integrated Unit development, UNMIS has established a Joint Integrated Unit support cell to assist the Board in identifying requirements and to coordinate international assistance to the Units. Donor assistance from a range of Member States will be essential to building effective Units. The UNMIS support cell is being enhanced with expert civilian capacity, including the capacity to develop a needs assessment and finalize arrangements for receipt of donor contributions through a United Nations trust fund. I encourage the parties to establish a regular consultation mechanism between UNMIS and the Board, to enhance effective information exchange on Joint Integrated Unit issues.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

31. The Council has previously expressed concern about the scope for meaningful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to take place before 2011 and, in its resolution 1784 (2007), requested that I set out a strategy and benchmarks for future progress, as well as the role of UNMIS at the various stages of implementation. Significant reduction in the size of active SAF and SPLA forces is unlikely to begin until there is greater confidence between the parties. Equally, since disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is a nationally led process, responsibility for defining a strategy lies with the parties. At the same time, there is a need to respond to the growing expectations of war veterans and the fiscal pressure to downsize armed forces. The adoption of the National Strategic Plan for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration by the Presidency in November 2007 reflects a new consensus, which should enable that process to begin in 2008. This is an important milestone for both parties.

32. The Northern and Southern disarmament, demobilization and reintegration commissions have indicated their intent to demobilize and reintegrate two categories of personnel before 2011: (a) a group of up to 50,000 personnel, mainly veterans and special needs groups, to enter disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in 2008; (b) combatants absorbed into SAF and SPLA since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (i.e. former other armed groups), totalling approximately 132,000 personnel, to be demobilized between 2008 and 2011. While the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the two groups may not initially result in a significant reduction of military capability on either side, it is a necessary prerequisite to longer-term downsizing and will support overall security and achievement of other Comprehensive Peace Agreement milestones, including redeployment.

33. While the United Nations is ready to support the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the two groups as defined by the parties, a number of essential steps will be required before such operations can begin. Subject to ongoing discussions with the Sudanese authorities, the following prerequisites may serve as useful benchmarks:

(a) Endorsement by the National Council for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Coordination of the national reintegration policy;

(b) Agreement by the parties on the respective roles of the Northern and Southern disarmament, demobilization and reintegration commissions for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the three transitional areas;

(c) Signature of a multi-year disarmament, demobilization and reintegration project document by the Government of National Unity, the Government of Southern Sudan and the United Nations;

(d) Signature of joint operational plans, including timelines, for the United Nations and both commissions;

(e) Commitment of the Government of National Unity, the Government of Southern Sudan and donor funding for 2008-2009 through voluntary contributions to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

34. All stakeholders must jointly agree on a feasible start date for demobilization. Based on current information, 1 August 2008 may serve as a possible target date for

beginning the first phase of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration as outlined in the National Strategic Plan. This would require the benchmarks outlined above to be met between April and July 2008.

35. Some positive steps have been taken in recent weeks. On 9 April, a round-table meeting with representatives of the Governments of the North and the South, donor countries and the United Nations under the auspices of the National Council for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Coordination reached agreement on the expected disarmament, demobilization and reintegration caseload associated with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (180,000 ex-combatants). Other positive recommendations included a joint United Nations-donor-government mechanism to determine the range of reintegration costs, and follow-up meetings in the same format to track progress.

36. In support of the above-mentioned process, UNMIS has increased its capacity to assist the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration commissions. An assistance framework detailing the role of the United Nations was adopted by the two Commissions in February. The Mission's role will focus on the provision of support to the disarmament and demobilization (including reinsertion) aspects of the multi-year disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, while UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund will take on support to the reintegration of adult and child combatants respectively. The World Food Programme will provide food assistance to ex-combatants and their families. The modalities of United Nations support are being further discussed with the parties through the Mission's integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Unit.

37. As planning proceeds, it will be necessary for the parties to engage closely with the United Nations and donors in a structured process. All parties will also need to assess the potential for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to create social instability and raise expectations beyond the designated caseload. In order to avoid the potential for violence, the planning process will need to ensure that there are adequate reintegration opportunities in place prior to the start of demobilization. I encourage donors to assist by providing support to the national reintegration strategy, which is expected to be submitted for consideration at the Sudan Consortium in May.

Border demarcation

38. The Mission does not currently have a specific mandate to support demarcation of the 1 January 1956 border between North and South Sudan. However, UNMIS is providing some limited support to the Technical Ad Hoc Border Committee at the Committee's request. The demarcation process is critical to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, as its completion would enable implementation of the Agreement in other areas, such as elections and redeployment, and is indispensable for planning for post-2011 scenarios. While several parts of the boundary are likely to be contentious, a well-documented technical process could help resolve differences and give the parties a sound basis for decision-making.

39. The parties have welcomed recent assistance from UNMIS and have indicated that further assistance is likely to be needed as demarcation moves forward. That may include, for example, acquisition of satellite imagery, map production, visits by

technical advisers, and technical and logistical assistance to the demarcation process once the path of the border alignment is approved by the Presidency.

40. In the light of the preceding requirements, it would be useful for the provision of technical and logistical support to the border demarcation process, as requested by the parties, to be included in the Mission's mandate. Peaceful demarcation will, of course, primarily require both parties to demonstrate the political will necessary to accommodate the other's concerns. The Mission stands ready to offer its good offices and facilitation as may be requested.

Wealth sharing

41. Implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in the area of wealth sharing has made good progress in some areas, beginning with the launch of the national currency in 2007. However the transparency of fiscal allocations remains contentious, both in the case of revenue-sharing at the national and Southern Sudan levels and at the level of federal allocations to the states. Conflict over wealth-sharing issues has the potential to derail the Comprehensive Peace Agreement partnership, while failure to address the related grievances of marginalized populations may result in local tensions and conflict. I have encouraged the parties to address the implementation of wealth-sharing aspects of the Agreement as a priority in the second half of the interim period.

42. Responsibility for supporting implementation of the wealth-sharing protocol is spread across a number of United Nations bodies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations Development Programme. The Mission does not have a direct role in any of the commissions associated with the protocol, with the exception of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission. I welcome the efforts being made to strengthen the Assessment and Evaluation Commission as a forum for the parties to address wealth-sharing issues, and would encourage Member States to consider how they may also assist the parties in that regard. UNMIS will continue to serve in its observer role, and within its capacity to promote coordination and to contribute information to other actors.

Elections

43. In resolution 1784 (2007), the Council recalled the UNMIS mandate to provide guidance and technical assistance to the parties in support of preparations for and conduct of elections. The Mission has made significant progress in the establishment of electoral capacity at both UNMIS headquarters in Khartoum and at the Juba field office. The Mission and its international partners continue to meet regularly in Khartoum and Juba on planning for electoral assistance. Further concrete operational planning and preparation will be dependent, however, on the adoption of the electoral law, which will set out the parameters of the electoral process, and on the establishment of the National Electoral Commission, which will be the national counterpart of the United Nations in supporting electoral preparations.

44. If elections are to take place before 9 July 2009, as stipulated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the timelines for preparing effective United Nations and donor assistance are already very short. The Sudan is a vast country; rains impede access to large areas for part of the year; organizational capacity is

limited in areas that have not previously participated in elections due to prolonged conflict; multiple processes (elections and referendums) may be organized by different actors and on different dates, and under intense time pressure. Given those challenges, UNMIS will need to be prepared to respond quickly to assistance requirements, which could necessitate significant additional resources.

45. I have asked the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to identify ways to strengthen UNMIS electoral capacity quickly in the short term to enable essential pre-planning. Such an effort will allow for a timely response to specific assistance requirements from the Sudanese authorities. At the same time, it will be necessary for national actors, the United Nations and donors to reach consensus on the scope of an appropriate United Nations role. Immediately following the establishment of the National Electoral Commission, a specialized assessment mission will be deployed to review the scope of United Nations assistance and resources required, in consultation with national authorities.

Conflict management

46. As demonstrated by the current crisis in Abyei, local conflicts in the Sudan pose a significant and growing threat to successful implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Deep fissures between communities in war-affected areas, combined with weak governance and security institutions in the South, magnify traditional and resource-based conflicts, which quickly become militarized. The census and elections also have the potential to exacerbate tensions, especially if the results are contested. In previous reports, I have noted a number of potential flashpoints, particularly around the 1 January 1956 border areas, in which local conflict can quickly spiral out of control and threaten the wider gains of peace.

47. To enable the United Nations to assist the parties in addressing local conflict, I have requested that UNMIS and the United Nations country team jointly develop a conflict management strategy for the 1 January 1956 border areas. Within its existing mandate and resources, that strategy would allow the United Nations to respond more effectively to requests from both parties for support to conflict resolution and to create an environment conducive to implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The border areas should be a first priority, leading to the establishment of a broader-based conflict management approach by UNMIS and the country team. Within UNMIS, the conflict management strategy is a critical responsibility of the civil affairs team, which will prioritize its activity accordingly.

Protection of civilians

48. Challenges have arisen in the practical interpretation of the UNMIS mandate on the protection of civilians. Given the incidence of violent local conflict and widespread protection challenges, including those arising from abuses by armed forces, it is important to clarify the role of the UNMIS military component and other actors in protecting civilians on the basis of the existing mandate and available resources. I have directed UNMIS to develop an integrated strategy for fulfilling its mandate with regard to the protection of civilians under imminent threat, which will be linked to the approach on conflict management, coordinated with the country team and discussed with the parties.

49. In that regard it will be important for all actors to understand the scope and limitations of the military component, which is primarily configured for monitoring activities, and to maximize complementarity between the UNMIS human rights and protection of civilians units. As the Sudan moves towards recovery and development, UNMIS capacity for the protection of civilians at the state level should be gradually shifted towards a longer-term human rights focus, based on a set of clear benchmarks that would signal the gradual phase-out of the protection of civilians unit and the strengthening of the UNMIS human rights presence as a part of a broader programme of governance and rule of law support.

Police

50. The Mission is mandated to assist the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in restructuring the police service, to assist in police training and to develop a training and evaluation programme. Restructuring operations have focused on the Southern Sudan Police Service, while training and capacity-building programmes are conducted in both North and South. Requests for training assistance in the North are increasing, particularly in the area of community policing. In the South, UNMIS provides basic police training courses, various skills-based courses and on-the-job training on key democratic policing principles in 30 co-located team sites in the South.

51. The Mission's support to police development in the Sudan faces considerable challenges. Two thirds of the Southern Sudan Police Service officers are illiterate, and less than 15 per cent of those currently registered have received any police training. The number of officers has surged in the past year, with thousands of former SPLA or ex-militia forces re-badged as police. Legislation to govern police activity is still lacking at the national and Southern Sudan levels, and the development of a strategic plan for police training by UNMIS has been hampered by the lack of sustainable funding.

52. In the light of the above, UNMIS is revising its police concept of operations, to provide the most effective assistance based on a realistic needs assessment. The Mission's authorized strength of police officers will be reviewed on the basis of that concept. Sustainable funding options for training and capacity-building need to be identified. In the absence of a formal vetting process, a progressive certification system with the Southern Sudan Police Service in Southern Sudan will be introduced as part of the UNMIS mandated evaluation programme.

Rule of law

53. Decades of conflict in the Sudan have drastically affected capacity in the judicial sector. In Southern Sudan, there is a profound lack of physical, institutional and human capacities. While judicial structures are much more developed in the major towns in the North, access to justice and law enforcement elsewhere is limited. The independence of the judiciary remains a concern, and justice for women is a key issue throughout the country.

54. In the past, UNMIS has undertaken rule of law projects in a broad range of areas, with topics often driven by local authorities' capacity and willingness to engage. To increase its impact and to reflect the development of local authorities in Southern Sudan, the Mission is developing a new strategic plan tailored to its specific role in supporting implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

The plan will include coordination of the international community in support of the nationally led justice reform process; monitoring and provision of guidance on legislative reform at the national level; and assistance to the Government of Southern Sudan to expand support to the rule of law beyond Juba in Southern Sudan through targeted and coordinated donor programmes. Those adjustments will be conducted within the existing mandate and overall staffing levels, including by UNMIS-UNDP joint programming in a select number of states and counties.

Support to correctional services

55. As part of the activities under its rule of law mandate, UNMIS is working to re-establish and strengthen the prison system in the Sudan through the provision of advisory, mentoring and training support to national prison officials. In the North, UNMIS has delivered some training courses, yet despite a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the United Nations in May 2006, access to prisons in the North and the three areas remains limited. In the South, good cooperation with national authorities has facilitated capacity-building for prison staff. Recently, the demand for training has expanded exponentially with the integration of a large number of ex-Sudan People's Liberation Army soldiers into the prison service.

56. The Mission's corrections activity is carried out under its broader rule of law mandate, with prison officers seconded against civilian police positions. However, corrections officers are a distinct category of uniformed personnel, and should be acknowledged as such in the Mission's mandate and budget, as is the case in other missions. UNMIS currently has 25 seconded corrections officers. Given the level of activity in carrying out their aspect of the Mission's mandate, it has been determined that 15 additional seconded officers will be required. The future number of officers will be reviewed on the basis of a detailed project proposal. Meanwhile, I encourage the Government of National Unity to implement the Memorandum of Understanding, grant access to prisons in the North, the three areas and Darfur and adopt the concept of co-location of corrections staff in its prisons.

Security and justice governance

57. There is not yet scope for a full-scale process of national security sector reform in the Sudan. However, in Southern Sudan the reorganization of former SPLA combatants into professional military, police and other uniformed services is critical to peace implementation. The services require clear roles and responsibilities and appropriate systems of governance to ensure transparency, accountability and adherence to human rights norms and standards.

58. While the United Nations is the lead actor in training the Southern Sudan Police Service, bilateral donors are more engaged in other areas, including professionalizing SPLA. Both donors and the Government of Southern Sudan have suggested that the United Nations provide support to coordinate assistance to SPLA and wider security sector development in the South. As a first step, an internal United Nations coordination mechanism will be established in the regional coordinator's office in Southern Sudan to give policy guidance to United Nations activities related to justice, corrections, police, the Sudan People's Liberation Army and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, aimed at developing a coherent United Nations strategy in support of the Government of Southern Sudan's policy

framework. That mechanism will facilitate close liaison with the Joint Integrated Unit support cell to ensure consistency of approach.

Human rights

59. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of all the people of the Sudan is a core principle of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. However, despite the enshrining of a bill of rights in the interim national constitution, violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms frequently occur. The Mission's extensive mandate to monitor and support the protection of human rights has until recently been focused mainly on Darfur and Khartoum. Activity in Southern Sudan and the three areas has been steadily strengthened, but many challenges remain, including strengthening the rule of law and national institutions. Legislation for the establishment of a national human rights commission and the enabling law for the Southern Sudan human rights commission have not yet been passed.

60. In the next phase of implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement it will be vital for UNMIS, in the area of human rights, to engage effectively throughout the mission area, including Southern Sudan and the three areas, and to focus on human rights issues most central to the peace process. Priority activities will include monitoring, reporting and analysis of civil and political rights ahead of the census and elections; advocacy with state authorities on key concerns; and capacity-building with state and judicial institutions. The Mission's human rights work will also support the establishment of effective national human rights institutions, including by strengthening civil society capacity for advocacy. To enhance the Mission's capacities in fulfilling those tasks, UNMIS will consolidate its presence in the South, initially in a selected number of state capitals, with further expansion possible once the model has proven effective.

Humanitarian, recovery and development

61. Economic marginalization is among the key grievances underpinning conflict in the Sudan; as such, both the credibility of the peace process at the community level and any effort to make unity attractive depend on the parties' ability to deliver tangible improvements in living standards. While humanitarian programming in Southern Sudan and the three areas remains significant, recovery and development activities have been progressively introduced in the last two years. Much has been achieved, particularly in agriculture and health programmes and in road and mine clearance. The Government of Southern Sudan has itself made significant progress in reconstruction efforts. More capacity-building is needed to enable the Government of Southern Sudan to manage assistance and deliver services. Key areas of support will be public finance, civil service management and support to the Government of Southern Sudan's three-year strategic plan.

62. The United Nations country team is now focusing on a widespread scale-up of recovery and development activities, accompanied by strengthened coordination around the shared goals of Comprehensive Peace Agreement implementation. I hope those efforts will be accompanied by an increased flow of resources from Member States towards recovery activities. Priorities will include effective reintegration of former combatants, returning refugees and internally displaced persons; conflict management and prevention activities; and additional support to recovery and development in the three areas. I have directed that the UNMIS Humanitarian

Assistance Liaison Unit be restructured to reflect the transition to recovery and development, while maintaining support for humanitarian activities.

63. The shift to recovery and development will take place in parallel with the continuation of humanitarian assistance. Although they have clearly decreased relative to recovery activities, humanitarian activities in Southern Sudan and the three areas still require the maintenance of an appropriate management and coordination structure. Particularly in the South, the lack of disaster response capacity further reinforces the need to maintain humanitarian response capacity in country.

Public information

64. The Mission's public information efforts at the national level have met challenges. Provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement intended to foster media reform have yet to be implemented by the parties, and early UNMIS proposals for active dissemination of the Agreement and the UNMIS mandate at the national level have had only partial success. Perceptions of UNMIS have also sometimes been affected by local mistrust of the international community's objectives, especially in Darfur, and by misunderstanding and misinformation about the Mission's role. UNMIS continues to face operational restrictions in Northern Sudan and the three areas. In Southern Sudan, UNMIS has been able to contribute more actively to dissemination of the Agreement. Radio Miraya is a success story, attracting listeners across Southern Sudan.

65. The Mission is now developing a strategy aimed at enhancing understanding of its overall role in the peace process and of its approach to upcoming Comprehensive Peace Agreement milestones, including the census, elections and border demarcation. Key messages will be coordinated across United Nations entities in the Sudan. Public information campaign messages on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, elections and human rights are being developed and will be extended to the north of the country as much as possible.

Structural issues

66. The Mission's original geographical structure was determined by the peacekeeping priorities established in 2005 and by the state structures that existed in the ceasefire zone prior to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Sector offices are located in the pre-Comprehensive Peace Agreement state capitals, with team sites established mainly according to force protection priorities. In addition, UNMIS has established the Juba field office to serve as a liaison point with the Government of Southern Sudan and coordinate UNMIS activities in the region. The Mission's structure will now be adapted to enable it to increase its focus on peacebuilding and support to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement political processes. An expanded civilian geographical presence is envisaged, which would enable representation in all ten state capitals in Southern Sudan and the three transitional areas (Abyei, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile). The Mission is exploring whether that shift can be accommodated within existing resources, with due attention to the security implications and the scope for synergies with the United Nations country team presence.

Coordination with the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

67. Peace in the Sudan is indivisible. The UNMIS mandate to support implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement implies activity on national issues that have implications for Darfur, including the census and elections. Meanwhile, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) has an explicit mandate to liaise with UNMIS in order to ensure the complementarity of its mandate with objectives of the Agreement. As the two missions operate side by side and share the same interlocutors, UNMIS will need to coordinate closely with the UNAMID as well as with the United Nations-African Union Joint Mediation Support Team to ensure coherence. Policy coordination will be especially important in regard to such national Comprehensive Peace Agreement processes as the census and elections, and to ensure coherence in standards, for example in police training.

68. UNMIS and UNAMID are establishing means to ensure coordination and cooperation, including with the United Nations country team. Arrangements to realize logistic and administrative synergies between UNMIS and UNAMID are underway. Necessary operational coordination between UNMIS, UNAMID and the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCAT) will be achieved by the exchange of liaison officers among the Joint Operations Centres of all three missions. Finally, I have instructed the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to ensure that adequate arrangements for policy coherence are also established at Headquarters.

VII. Financial aspects

69. The General Assembly, in its resolution 61/289 of 29 June 2007, decided to appropriate for the maintenance of UNMIS for the period from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008 the amount of $846.3 million, equivalent to $70.5 million per month. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNMIS beyond 30 April 2008, the cost of maintaining the Mission until 30 June 2008 would be limited to the amounts approved by the General Assembly.

70. As at 31 December 2007, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNMIS amounted to $453.1 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to $2,719.3 million. Reimbursement of troop-contributing Governments for troop costs has been made for the period up to 29 February 2008 and for contingent-owned equipment costs for the period up to 31 December 2007.

VIII. Observations and recommendations

71. I am pleased by the parties' sustained commitment to work together in the Government of National Unity and to overcome differences and tensions through dialogue. Preserving the partnership between the National Congress Party and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement is fundamental to the success of the peace process. I also welcome the recent good cooperation between the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan in preparing an agenda for economic recovery and development that will target war-affected areas and contribute to delivering a true "peace dividend" to the people of Sudan.

72. At the same time, I remain concerned that tangible progress in certain key areas of implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which should underpin the partnership, is still lacking. The recent clashes and tensions in the Abyei area represent a potential threat to the Agreement and to the NCP-SPLM partnership. I urge the parties to summon the political will to address difficult outstanding issues, particularly the status of Abyei and the disputed 1 January 1956 border. Further delay in resolving those issues may complicate the situation and lead to unintended conflict.

73. As technical preparations for the census are finalized, I strongly urge both parties to engage fully in resolving remaining differences to enable a full and peaceful census with maximum coverage. Delays in the preparations for national elections are a source of concern. I reiterate the need for the parties to make swift progress in that area and to clarify the scope and scale of the support required from the United Nations. I encourage the parties to work closely with my Special Representative to that end.

74. In the next phase of implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, a reorientation of the Mission's priorities and activities will be required in order to maximize the contribution that UNMIS can make to the process. That will include a shift of priorities towards the increased exercise of the Mission's good offices function, confidence-building and conflict management, particularly at the local level; a reorientation of peacekeeping activities around the 1 January 1956 border area; the reallocation of resources to anticipated hot spots; support to the generation of a visible peace dividend throughout the country; and the strengthening of engagement with state authorities in Southern Sudan. The structural review and strategic assessment carried out by UNMIS and the findings of the technical assessment mission provide a sound and comprehensive basis for planning and implementing those important adjustments.

75. I believe that, overall, the Mission's current mandate is broadly adequate to accommodate the preceding shift in focus. However, relatively minor amendments are required to enable UNMIS to maximize its support to the parties and its contribution to the next phase of implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and to enhance its focus on the priorities identified above. I therefore recommend that in its renewal of the UNMIS mandate the Council authorize UNMIS:

(a) To provide technical and logistical support to the border demarcation process, as requested by the parties;

(b) To provide support to the corrections system, within the overall rule of law mandate, and in that connection authorize the deployment of up to 40 seconded corrections officers;

(c) To monitor, within existing capacity, the activities of Lords' Resistance Army elements in Southern Sudan that may have implications for the security of UNMIS and other mandated activities;

(d) To liaise with the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, the African Union-United Nations Joint Mediation Support Team, neighbouring United Nations missions and other stakeholders to ensure complementary implementation of those entities' mandates in support of the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

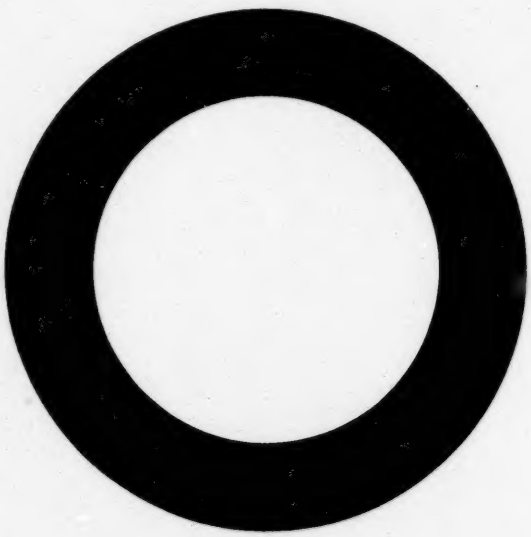
In view of the above, I recommend that the Security Council consider extending the mandate of UNMIS for a further period of twelve months, until 30 April 2009.

76. Further progress on redeployment, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and the formation of Joint Integrated Units will be key to maintaining a secure environment. I note with satisfaction the significant progress made by the parties, in consultation with the United Nations, in the planning and preparation for the multi-year disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. In the light of those developments, and in response to Security Council resolution 1784 (2007), paragraph 16 (a), I recommend that the Security Council support the initial disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of veterans and special needs groups, to begin in 2008. I call upon the Government of the Sudan and its partners to work towards the benchmarks identified, and urge the international community to give the programme its full political and financial support. With regard to the development of Joint Integrated Units, I encourage donors to assist and the Government of National Unity to develop a mechanism to enhance engagement between UNMIS and the Joint Defence Board.

77. Furthermore, at the political level, I encourage the Council to recognize the need for broad-based support to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement process, as well as to post-2011 stability. The crisis in Darfur has diverted attention from the strategic road map offered by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement process. Sustained focus on the Agreement is essential for the long-term stability of the Sudan. At the same time, work to support the Agreement needs to fit into an overall strategy that reflects the challenges in Darfur and Chad in particular. A "whole-Sudan" approach to policymaking as well as a regional vision and close coordination and policy coherence among United Nations entities in the region will be indispensable for facilitating lasting peace.

78. The aim of the United Nations effort in the Sudan should be to support implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, with a view to helping the parties fulfil their commitment to make unity attractive and create the conditions required for a peaceful referendum in 2011. Our activities should also contribute to laying a foundation for stability post-2011. The United Nations role should be to support the parties in fulfilling their obligations in such a way that the interim period does not mark the end of a truce, but the restoration of long-term peace and stability. To achieve this, it will be critical to prioritize those elements of peacebuilding that will enable the parties to manage their future together, whether within a federal structure or as neighbouring states. A successful outcome would be one in which, by 2011, political, economic and security ties are sufficiently strong, and institutions developed to an extent, that either outcome of the referendum could be contemplated peacefully. The United Nations system will scrupulously align its activities, first, along the milestones required to reach the referendum peacefully and, second, along the foundations essential for a sustained peace beyond 2011.

79. In conclusion, I wish to extend my gratitude to my Special Representative, to all United Nations personnel working in the Sudan and to the Member States, including troop-contributing countries and donors, for their determined efforts to support the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.



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Report by the Secretary-General concerning the credentials of the alternate representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on the Security Council

Pursuant to rule 15 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the Secretary-General wishes to report that he has received a letter dated 21 April 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations stating that David Quarrey has been appointed alternate representative of the United Kingdom on the Security Council.

In the opinion of the Secretary-General, that letter constitutes adequate provisional credentials.

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General Assembly
Sixty-second session
Agenda items 17 and 18

The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Identical letters dated 22 April 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I write to inform you of the Palestinian terrorist attack on the Kerem Shalom crossing, as well as violence carried out by Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip in recent days.

On 19 April, three disguised military vehicles laden with explosives approached the Kerem Shalom crossing under heavy morning fog. Kerem Shalom handles approximately 200 humanitarian aid trucks each week, and is the central access point for food and supplies into Gaza. Palestinian terrorists detonated two of the vehicles, wounding 13 Israel Defence Forces (IDF) soldiers; one moderately seriously, two moderately and eight lightly. Four terrorists were killed, and IDF foiled an attempt to detonate the third vehicle. The bombing attack was combined with a barrage of 15 mortar shells fired at the area. Later in the day, IDF thwarted a fourth booby-trapped vehicle from reaching the security fence near Kibbutz Nirim. The terrorists planned a wider attack, including possibly kidnapping IDF soldiers.

A day earlier, on 18 April, at least 16 Qassam rockets were fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip. One hit high-tension power lines in Sderot, causing an electricity blackout, and another landed in the yard of a house in Sderot. Another rocket exploded near a school.

The attack on Kerem Shalom is a grave assault on the sovereignty of the State of Israel, and constitutes the fifth such attack in 10 days upon a central lifeline crossing; the Nahal Oz fuel terminal was attacked by Palestinian terrorists on 9 April. Hamas, which bears responsibility for these attacks, seeks to escalate the situation by attacking the very arteries designed to bring aid and relief to Palestinian civilians. Moreover, as the crossing points are evidence of the cooperation between Israel and the moderate Palestinian leadership, Hamas desperately forces their closure. But in attacking the crossing points, Hamas deprives the Palestinian civilians of humanitarian aid, and hence bears responsibility for any humanitarian

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situation. In contrast, Israel will continue to facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip even while it is attacked from that territory.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 17 and 18, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dan **Gillerman**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative